

For Immediate Release

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Washington watersheds selected for Conservation Security Program

SPOKANE, Wash., Nov. 2 – Conservation stewards in 11 Washington watersheds may be eligible to participate in the Conservation Security Program (CSP) sign-up to be held early this winter, USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service announced today.

The priority watersheds in Washington are the Lower Skagit, Banks Lake, Upper Columbia-Entiat, Upper Crab, Rock, Willapa Bay, Nisqually, Dungeness-Elwha, Colville, Lower Grand Ronde, and Middle Columbia-Hood. Nearly 30 Washington counties have land within the selected watersheds (see table).

“These priority watersheds have been selected because they represent a balance of resource needs, historic stewardship, potential producer eligibility, and the technology and adequate staff needed to successfully implement the program,” NRCS State Conservationist Gus Hughbanks said.

CSP is a voluntary program that supports ongoing conservation stewardship of agricultural working lands and enhances the condition of America’s natural resources. The program rewards producers for historic stewardship activities on working lands and provides enhancement payments for producers who agree to implement additional conservation measures.

“Producers with a majority of their land inside these watershed boundaries have met the first criteria for eligibility in this program,” Hughbanks said. Additional eligibility requirements, as well as the watershed maps, can be found at <http://www.wa.nrcs.usda.gov>.

“Over the next eight years, we anticipate that all private land managers in Washington will have the opportunity to apply for CSP as their watershed is selected for a sign-up,” he said.

Last year, 18 watersheds were selected nationally, including the Moses Coulee watershed in Washington. More than half of the 83 Moses Coulee watershed producers who applied for the program qualified for program payments ranging from several hundred dollars per year to more than \$35,000 per year.

Nationally, 202 watersheds, covering more than 83 million acres in every state and the

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Washington watersheds selected for conservation program... *continued*

Caribbean area, were selected for the program in fiscal year 2005.

To help producers learn more about the program, the Natural Resources Conservation Service will conduct numerous CSP informational meetings at various locations throughout the watersheds in the weeks leading up to the winter sign-up.

As the first step in the sign-up process, Hughbanks recommends that producers should determine if they have a majority of their land within the selected watershed boundary. “Those producers who may have land in the watershed will receive a letter from the local NRCS office within the coming weeks,” he said. Hughbanks said that in addition to their availability on the NRCS web site, maps of the watershed boundaries will be posted at various locations throughout the affected areas.

After determining that they have a majority of their land in the watershed, producers should then plan to attend one of the informational meetings to find out more about CSP and producer eligibility requirements, Hughbanks said.

“Throughout the sign-up, we will work to make producers aware of informational meetings through the news media, direct mail, and various producer organizations,” he said. “In addition, a sign-up announcement will be published that will detail the specific program requirements within the priority watersheds,” Hughbanks said.

The funds that will be dedicated to CSP are part of the \$1.6 billion in mandatory funding that USDA announced last week to help farmers and ranchers better plan their conservation efforts. USDA released these funds to help farmers and ranchers better plan their conservation efforts by knowing the initial mandatory program funding and technical assistance levels well before the next planting season begins, thus helping to connect their business decisions to protecting water, air, soil and wildlife.

“Last year, agricultural producers in the Moses Coulee watershed proved that Washington’s producers are ready, willing and able land stewards,” Hughbanks said. “Now hundreds of additional Washington producers will have the opportunity to be rewarded for their outstanding conservation efforts,” he said.

Producers can learn more about CSP on the world-wide web at www.wa.nrcs.usda.gov.

Watersheds, HUCs and Washington counties with land in the CSP watersheds.

Watershed Name	Hydrologic Unit Code	Washington counties with land in the watershed
Lower Skagit	17110007	Snohomish, Skagit
Banks Lake	17020014	Grant, Lincoln, Douglas
Upper Columbia-Entiat	17020010	Chelan, Grant, Kittitas, Douglas
Upper Crab	17020013	Adams, Grant, Lincoln, Spokane
Rock	17060109	Adams, Whitman, Lincoln, Spokane
Willapa Bay	17100106	Grays Harbor, Pacific, Wahkiakum, Lewis
Nisqually	17110015	Pierce, Lewis, Thurston
Dungeness-Elwha	17110020	Jefferson, Clallam
Colville	17020003	Stevens, Pend Oreille
Lower Grand Ronde	17060106	Walla Walla, Garfield, Asotin, Columbia
Middle Columbia-Hood	17070105	Klickitat, Yakima, Skamania